

METRO PICTURES

Wilson, Michael. "Art: John Miller, 'Suburban Past Time,'" *Time Out New York* (February 16, 2012): 33



John Miller, "Suburban Past Time"



Metro Pictures, through Mar 10
(see Chelsea)

The British press was abuzz recently over the government's sheepish admission that a fake boulder containing surveillance equipment was used to spy on the Russians in 2006. Photos of the device portray a stone packed with gadgetry, which reportedly cost several million pounds to engineer. A similar mock rock occupies the first room of John Miller's

current show, part of a quasi-theatrical installation that also features an artificial maple tree and posterlike black-and-white wallpaper with images of a Berlin apartment block. Larger and more obvious than the Brits' device, Miller's simulated chunk of the great outdoors is as physically hollow as the middlebrow culture that "Suburban Past Time" pokes fun at.

A similarly alienated *mise en scène* occupies the second room, where a depiction of bland hotels at a Spanish beach resort provides the backdrop for an arrangement of curious objects—filing cabinets finished

with metal-flake paint; a pair of shaped carpets spelling out *no*—and two silent, seated nonperformers.

Miller furthers his explosion of the generic in videos made with Takuji Kogo. Pairing quotes from personal ads with looping animation and eerie, synthesized Muzak, the duo presents a shrewd commentary on the standardized languages in which even the subtlest and most subjective desires are phrased. Miller's rock may lack recording capabilities, but he still evinces a gaze focused piercingly on a terminally banal society.—*Michael Wilson*